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ABSTRACT

This guide has been created to accompany the Lancaster, Pa., School District's Bilingual/ESL Reading Assessment Materials. The guide includes reading tests and information about how the tests were made, about how to give and score the tests, and about how to use test results. The tests are designed to help the teacher monitor changes in students' language proficiency and to give the student the opportunity to receive fair and accurate information about his language development. The Reading Assessment Materials themselves consist of short reading passages in which students are required to fill in blank spaces with appropriate English words or phrases. (CHK)

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TEACHER'S GUIDE
For use with the

READING ASSESSMENT MATERIALS

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

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Written in Cooperation with
THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LANCASTER
Bilingual/ESL Programs

May, 1976

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INTRODUCTION

This guide has been created to accompany the School District of Lancaster's Bilingual/ESL Reading Assessment Materials. In the Guide you will find information about how the tests were made, about how to give and score the tests, and about how to use test results once you have them.

The current series of tests will be useful in keeping track of individual and group progress made in acquiring reading. Similar materials can be created on the model provided by these materials for applications such as (1) the screening of newcomers to the Bilingual/ESL programs, (2) the placement of students in specific materials, (3) decision-making with respect to readiness to exit the program or to shift from one component of the program to another.

This Guide is not intended to supplant the human resources of Testing and Evaluation for Bilinguals. It is intended to complement those resources. Please call should there be something that isn't made clear in the Guide.

* * * * *

I

ABOUT THE TESTS

The need exists to measure language proficiency from several different directions. These tests in the written mode represent one of those directions. For the project administrator and for the teacher, these tests satisfy the need for having a way of keeping track of change in the language proficiencies of students over time. Likewise, they can serve as a vehicle for the effective matching of students with appropriate materials.

For the student, the tests offer an opportunity to receive fair and accurate information about his language development (though we can't expect him to jump at the chance). Additionally, when conducted in an environment of minimal threat and maximal support, this language proficiency assessment can provide the kind of information that language acquirers need to have in order to confirm or reject important language-related hypotheses that they have generated. In short, these tests meet needs on various levels.

However, it should be noted that tests and test results are valuable only when used by people who recognize the limitations of any formal testing enterprise. At least two things are so important that they merit attention here: (1) the interpretation of test results, and (2) the nature of a test result as an <u>estimate</u> of an ability or of an approximate description of a condition or set of conditions.

The test does not exist which yields a score that interprets itself or which carries its own suggestions for appropriate subsequent action. Though suggestions are to be presented later in this Guide for the interpretation of the results obtained using the Reading Assessment Materials, it should be emphasized that any measurement device needs to be thoughtfully employed by a responsible human(s) consumer. The results of tests themselves are meaningless unless translated carefully into adjustments in the educational process designed to further enable each individual participant in that process (student and teacher alike) to reap maximal benefits.

One can easily agree, then, with Kenneth Goodman (1973), who says that there are but two legitimate uses for reading tests:

> "(1) To measure the effectiveness with which any person uses reading to comprehend written language . . .
>
> (2) To diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of readers as an aid to planning instruction which will help to make them more effective." (p.21)

We need to understand that the legitimate uses of the tests in this packet are restricted to the measurement of an underlying construct or process, and to the adjustment of educational practices. They are specifically <u>not</u> capable of measuring teacher effectiveness nor program success. And they most emphatically cannot be used as anything but an <u>estimate</u> of an underlying ability or process.

Before using the tests, then, you ought to ask yourself the questions: "Why am I testing?" and "Who is to be served by my testing?" If the answers relate to the adjustment of an educational pro-

cess to serve the best interests of the individuals involved in that process, then the tests can serve the purposes for which they were designed.

Source and nature of the test passages

You'll notice that each of the passages is a complete thought or idea, or at least a series of closely and logically related thoughts that make sense beginning where they begin and ending where they end. In short, they are self-sufficient, meaningful units.

The passages were selected because they treat topics assumed to be within the experience of the examinees. They are non-controversial topics - unless, that is, one can find something inflammatory about an abandoned house, a trip to the store, life in the city, or the like.

Since a wide variety of materials is in use throughout the various classes in both the elementary and the secondary schools in School District of Lancaster Bilingual/ESL Programs, the passages were selected from sources not in use in any classroom. Thus it is felt that, with respect to the familiarity of the passages, no one group is systemmatically favored.

Two sets of tests are provided. The first set (FORM 123) is composed of three passages determined to be at the first-grade, second-grade, and third-grade levels respectively. The second set (FORM 45) consists of two passages, one at the fourth-grade level and one at the fifth-grade level. It was our best judgement that the majority of the students to be tested would not exceed the level

of FORM 123 in reading proficiency, but that for those who might, the two additional levels would be adequately challenging. Should this judgement prove to be incorrect, adjustments can be made in any or all of the passages.

Each passage is of a length sufficient to provide for the deletion of twenty-five words. Every seventh word has been deleted, excepting some proper names. Some parts of each passage have been left intact. This unmutilated context supplies a beginning and an ending for each passage. It is felt that a cloze procedure using as many as twenty-five deletions will be an adequately reliable test. The conjunction of two or more such procedures will enhance that reliability.

Alternate forms

One provision for alternate forms of the tests (for subsequent years of use) is built into the cloze procedure. The system used for designating grade levels for each passage provides a second. The first would simply see a modification in the starting point for the deletion pattern. In 'The Empty House' (the first passage in FORM 123), for example, instead of deleting the adjective which precedes the word 'house' for the first item, that adjective can be restored and every seventh word starting with 'house' can be deleted. This process would ultimately yield seven alternate forms of approximately equal difficulty.

The second method would see the selection of alternate passages whose grade levels match the levels of the current ones, as

determined using the FRY (1968) system. (This system is completely reviewed in a pamphlet which accompanies these Reading Assessment Materials.) No claim could be made for the absolute, discrete comparability of alternate forms using either of these methods. However, it is within the level of impreciseness associated with cloze (indeed, with the whole notion of 'language proficiency') that a mild degree of inequality could be a tolerable circumstance.

PRE/POST TESTING FOR ANY ONE YEAR, HOWEVER, OUGHT TO USE THE SAME PASSAGES AND THE SAME DELETION PATTERNS.

II

HOW TO GIVE AND SCORE THE TESTS

Giving the tests

The tests are administered on an untimed basis. They are not speed tests; they are power tests. Directions to the students are simple: READ THE PASSAGE(S). FILL IN THE BLANKS WITH WORDS THAT FIT THE BEST. Below are some sample directions that you might read to your students. You'll want to give directions in whatever language the student is most likely to understand, of course, and as long as the following ideas are expressed, the exact words are unimportant:

English Language Directions to Students

READ THE ENTIRE STORY BEFORE YOU START FILLING IN THE SPACES. IN EACH STORY, SOME OF THE WORDS HAVE BEEN TAKEN OUT. IN EACH BLANK SPACE, WRITE THE WORD THAT YOU THINK WAS LEFT OUT. YOU MIGHT FEEL THAT MORE THAN ONE WORD COULD FIT THE BLANK, BUT PUT ONLY ONE WORD IN EACH BLANK.

Spanish Language Directions to Students

> LEA EL CUENTO COMPLETO ANTES DE COMENZAR A LLENAR LOS ESPACIOS. EN CADA CUENTO SE HAN OMITIDO ALGUNAS DE LAS PALABRAS. EN CADA ESPACIO EN BLANCO, ESCRIBA LA PALABRA QUE CREE QUE SE HA OMITIDO. QUIZÁS SIENTA QUE MÁS DE UNA PALABRA SIRVA PARA CADA ESPACIO, PERO ESCRIBA SOLAMENTE UNA DE ELLAS.

I'm giving English and Spanish language versions of the directions, though I do understand that other minority-language users comprise the School District of Lancaster Bilingual/ESL population. For help with these other language groups, should you need it, call me.

Some additional instructions, such as those that follow, may be added, though I don't have any evidence that additional instructions such as these enhance the student's comprehension of the task:

(1) Try to fill in every blank. Don't be afraid to guess. Take reasonable guesses. Wild guessing won't help.

(2) Skip hard blanks, and come back to them later.

(3) Improper spelling won't count against you unless I just can't understand what you wrote.

(4) You can use contractions (such as "I'm") to fill in a blank.

Even though I don't know that a lot of extra instructions help (you should do as you like - I don't think it can hurt), I do know of two things you should do to help the student along with the task:

(1) Do a sample exercise. Make up a short (4 or 5 items) cloze procedure using materials you know to be familiar to students, either in English or in a more familiar language. Practice until the idea is clear. DON'T BOTHER TO PRACTICE FOR SEVERAL DAYS OR THROUGH SEVERAL PASSAGES AFTER YOU ARE FAIRLY CERTAIN THAT STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THE TASK. IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT AFTER A VERY EARLY POINT, PRACTICE ON THE CLOZE FORMAT DOESN'T CHANGE SCORES A BIT.

(2) If you want to take the extra time required for some individual students whose writing you are concerned about, you may record answers which the student generates orally while

reading silently. It would be advisable to note in an appropriate place that the student has not written his responses, but rather that you have recorded oral responses. You must be careful not to cue his responses if you use this alternative procedure, nor should you encourage him, nor discourage him. LOTS OF LUCK. This procedure is not recommended but is an alternative that will provide an index to comprehension.

Summary

(1) GIVE DIRECTIONS ORALLY.

(2) DWELL ON PRACTICE EXERCISE ONLY UNTIL THE TASK IS CLEAR TO ALL STUDENTS.

(3) DON'T SET A TIME LIMIT ON THE TESTS.

(4) ADVISE THE STUDENT TO READ THE PASSAGE, BLANKS AND ALL, AT LEAST ONCE BEFORE BEGINNING TO RECORD RESPONSES.

(5) THE STUDENT'S SELECTION OF APPROPRIATE WORDS IS IMPORTANT-SPEED IS NOT.

(6) ONLY ONE WORD PER BLANK. (BUT NOTE: When you correct the tests, you might find that some responses of more than one word are perfectly acceptable. You should award full credit for any response which is contextually appropriate, even if it is a multi-word response. The direction to the student to use only one word per blank simply averts the unmanageably chaotic responses which might be generated in the absence of that direction.

(7) RESORT TO RECORDING RESPONSES YOURSELF ONLY WHEN IT IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.

Scoring the tests

Scoring should be based on the 'any appropriate' method. Research with second-language acquirers indicates that this is the best method to use. ALLOW CREDIT FOR ANY WORD (OR WORDS) WHICH ARE ACCEPTABLE TO YOU AS A NATIVE SPEAKER OF ENGLISH. The response should be contextually and grammatically acceptable to be 'formally' correct. Report credit for this kind of response only.

You'll notice, however, that some responses that you find unacceptable and that you consequently do not report credit for, really do appear to evidence some degree of comprehension. It would be these items that form the basis of meaningful learning activities, since the student would appear to be on the right track. It is recommended, therefore, that for formal reporting purposes, you score rather ruthlessly (BUT FAIRLY AND ACCURATELY). This will enhance reliability and interpretability of test scores. BUT FOR THE PURPOSES OF REPORTING RESULTS TO STUDENTS, IT WOULD BE FAR MORE MEANINGFUL TO GIVE AS MUCH CREDIT AS POSSIBLE FOR ANY EVIDENCE OF COMPREHENSION, OR FOR ANYTHING YOU CAN INTERPRET AS A SIGNIFICANT APPROXIMATION TO REAL ENGLISH-LANGUAGE USE. Using the test as a diagnostic tool, then, can be more humane than using it for formal reporting purposes. I am suggesting that you keep two things in mind while scoring:

(1) Remember that you and other teachers need to compare and communicate results. If you are all somewhat 'ruthless', you'll find that that which is acceptable to you is very similar to that which is acceptable to others who use English as a native language.

(2) B U T. Remember also that the paper you are scoring belongs to a person with feelings and sensitivities. That person will have a much more profitable experience if you allow a good deal of leeway in the way you accept his approximations to what you might consider correct English.

Therefore, score the tests for two audiences: (1) score it ruthlessly for the formal rsporting audience (don't mark up the test, however); (2) score it compassionately, or at least more leniently, for reporting results to each examinee.

Incidentally, since each passage has twenty-five items deleted, the maximum possible score is 125 (25 items times 5 passages). One

could prudently expect, however, that the highest scores would be in the 60's, the lowest near zero, and the average around 20.

Keep in mind, too, that generally the second level is more difficult than the first, the third more difficult than the second, and so forth. However, the FRY system for assigning grade levels on the basis of the number of sentences and syllables cannot be considered a complete system. You will find students who do better on the second level than on the first. Don't be overly concerned about that. Simply describe the student's performance in terms of the higher level, recording the total score (derived by totaling the number correct in all passages), and the 'instructional' reading level (see the next section) in the scorebox which immediately follows the student's name on the test cover page.

Summary

(1) SCORE ON THE 'ANY APPROPRIATE' PLAN.

(2) DON'T MARK UP THE TEST. A SMALL DOT (•) BESIDE INACCURATE RESPONSES IS SUFFICIENT.

(3) REPORT RESULTS TO STUDENTS INDIVIDUALLY AND COMPASSIONATELY, ALLOWING AS MUCH CREDIT AS YOU CAN FIND A GOOD EXCUSE TO ALLOW.

(4) RECORD, FOR FORMAL PURPOSES, RESULTS OF 'RUTHLESS' SCORING.

(5) DESCRIBE EACH STUDENT'S PROFICIENCY IN TERMS OF (a) TOTAL SCORE ON ALL PASSAGES, AND (b) BEST SCORE ON HIGHEST LEVEL READING PASSAGE. SCORES CAN BE RECORDED ON THE COVER SHEET OF THE TEST OR IN THE STUDENT'S CUMULATIVE RECORD OR BOTH.

(6) TWO FINAL HINTS: (a) DON'T LOOK AT THE STUDENT'S NAME BEFORE SCORING TEST, AND (b) SCORE ONLY ONE STORY AT A TIME.

III

UNDERSTANDING AND USING THE RESULTS

Determining instructional grade level

Criteria for the interpretation of cloze procedure percentage scores have not, to my knowledge, been developed with specific reference to students in second-language environments. However, it is proposed that the rule of thumb that Anderson (1971) has established for native language users should generally apply. Anderson himself makes a similar claim. He proposes that scores of fifty-three percent correct and above clearly indicate that the examinee is dealing with the materials at an 'independent' reading level. Scores between forty-four and fifty-two percent correct indicate that the materials are at the student's 'instructional' grade level. Scores below forty-four percent correct should signal that the materials are too hard for the student; that is, they are 'frustration'-level materials. In the present packet, these bands for each test are approximately:

CONVERSION BANDS
10 and below - FRUSTRATION
11 to 14 - INSTRUCTIONAL
15 and above - INDEPENDENT

Use these bands to determine instructional grade level by comparing the best score on any one passage (NOT THE TOTAL SCORE) with the bands.

Should a student score ten or fewer correct on the least difficult passage, it might be appropriate to suspect that that student has not yet acquired reading. If the student scores fifteen or more correct on the hardest passage, he'll need more challenging materials. All others should be in between.

Other thoughts on using test scores

Reference is again made to the 'formal' and the 'diagnostic' uses for the results. 'Formal' use refers to recording the appropriate score (TOTAL score and INSTRUCTIONAL level) on the test cover page or in the student's cumulative file and letting it go at that. 'Diagnostic' here refers to using your intuition, your experience working with students, and your knowledge of each student's ways of doing things in conjunction with test results. By studying the errors that students make on the test passages, you'll be able to ferret out specific areas of both group and individual strengths and weaknesses. It is this analysis of error in conjunction with what you know about each student, added to your good judgement as a teacher, that comprises the best 'diagnostic' use of the test results.

You might also want to consider using what you know about readability measures such as the FRY system to match your students with appropriate materials. Once you have some idea of student reading level in relation to the five levels represented in these Reading Assessment Materials, you'll be able to avoid frustration-level materials while appropriately employing instructional and independent-level materials.

Summary

(1) USE CONVERSION BANDS TO ESTABLISH INSTRUCTIONAL READING LEVEL.

(2) STUDY ERRORS AND OMISSIONS TO DERIVE GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL DIAGNOSTIC INFORMATION.

(3) MATCH STUDENTS AND READING MATERIALS USING THE FRY READABILITY SYSTEM.

* * * * *

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* * * * *

READING ASSESSMENT MATERIALS

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LANCASTER
Bilingual/ESL Programs

TOTAL:
INSTRUCTIONAL:

NAME _____
(Nombre)

TODAY'S DATE _____ GRADE IN SCHOOL _____
(Fecha de hoy) (Grado)

BIRTHDATE _____ SEX: M _____ F _____
(Fecha de nacimiento) (Sexo)

PLACE OF BIRTH _____
(Lugar de nacimiento)

YOUR SCHOOL'S NAME _____ TEACHER _____
(Nombre de la escuela) (Maestra o maestro)

FORM 123

MAY, 1976

Prepared by
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THE EMPTY HOUSE

There was an old stone house on Juan's street. It was big. It was empty. It had a small porch which was covered with dust.

"I saw a light in the old house," Juan said to his friend Carlos.

"Nobody lives there," Carlos said. "You couldn't have seen a light."

"But I really did," said Juan. "There _____ a light in one of the _____. I saw it last night."

"Let's _____ look at the house," Carlos said.

_____ boys went to the house. There _____ three broken steps leading up to _____ door. Many windows were broken. It _____ a scary place.

"Let's go home," _____ Carlos.

"I want to go inside," Juan _____. He climbed the broken steps. Carlos _____ too. They pushed hard on the _____. Carlos fell down.

"Are you all _____?" Juan asked.

Carlos got up. "I'm _____ right," he said. "But let's go home."

"_____ look inside," Juan said. He pushed hard _____ the door again.

The boys couldn't _____ into the house. They walked around _____. On the side, a window was _____ out. Juan climbed up to the _____. Carlos helped him. They

saw a _____ moving in the window. Juan fell _____ the window on top of Carlos. _____ boys ran home fast. They were _____ of the empty house.

The next _____ they went back. Now there were _____ lights in the windows. The front steps were fixed. The porch was cleaned. A new family was living there. They had been there the night before, too. The boys laughed. They weren't afraid anymore.

* * * * *

BUYING FOOD FOR THE FAMILY

Mrs. Martin was at the grocery store. She needed to buy some food for the family.

She asked a clerk, "Where is the fresh fruit?"

The clerk said, "Down the next aisle."

"Thanks for your help," said Mrs. Martin.

She went down the next aisle. She looked at all of the fresh fruit. She went to _____ counter with apples on it. She _____ a couple of apples for her _____ Fred. There were a lot of _____ on the counter. But she didn't _____ any of them. They were too _____. So she didn't buy any.

Fred _____ some bananas, too. Mrs. Martin walked _____ to a table piled high with _____.

"I want to buy some ripe _____, please," she said to a nearby _____.

"How many?" asked the clerk.

"Five _____ six," Mrs. Martin said. The clerk _____ Mrs. Martin the bananas. She put them in _____ cart with the rest of the _____. Her family liked to eat fresh _____. Mrs. Martin always bought plenty.

Then Mrs. Martin _____ to the bread counter. It _____ around the corner from the fresh _____. She saw a lot of fresh _____ and rolls. Her daughter, Marta

liked _____ rolls. Mrs. Martin didn't see the _____ of rolls Marta liked best. So _____ just bought two loaves of white _____.

"What time is it?" Mrs. Martin asked a clerk who was working near her.

"It's about 6:30," he said.

"It's getting late. I'd better hurry. I need to fix supper," she said." She got in line at the first checkstand, and paid for her food. She hurried home. She was tired. She was glad to be home.

* * * * *

LIFE IN THE CITY

It's late at night in the city. But the city is not asleep. The sidewalks are filled with people. Some are leaving the movies. Some are leaving plays. And some, concerts. Others are _____ for buses. Cafes are crowded with _____. Hotels are filled with people from _____ over.

Many people work at night _____ the city. Bright lights shine from _____ windows of some buildings. In hospitals, _____ are making their night rounds. Firemen _____ awakened by an alarm. There is _____ fire somewhere in the city.

The _____ are noisy. Taxis are taking people _____ the airport to the hotels. They _____ to sleep a few hours before _____ next day in the city. Trucks _____ bringing fresh fruit and meat into _____ city. Toward morning, the streets are _____. But they are never empty.

Soon _____ morning in the city. By eight _____ the streets are again filled with _____. Many people live and work in _____ city. But many people who work _____ the city don't live here. These working _____ who don't live in the _____ are now hurrying out of the _____ station. And out of buses. And _____ of cars. The people

who live _____ the city are hurrying out of their houses and apartments. Everyone is in a hurry. There's not even time for breakfast. Life is busy both day and night in the city.

I'm glad I live in the city. I'm never alone. I'm always busy.

* * * * *

READING ASSESSMENT MATERIALS

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LANCASTER
Bilingual/ESL Programs

TOTAL:
INSTRUCTIONAL:

NAME_____
(Nombre)

TODAY'S DATE_____ GRADE IN SCHOOL_____
(Fecha de hoy) (Grado)

BIRTHDATE_____ SEX: M_____ F_____
(Fecha de nacimiento) (Sexo)

PLACE OF BIRTH_____
(Lugar de nacimiento)

YOUR SCHOOL'S NAME_____ TEACHER_____
(Nombre de la escuela) (Maestra o maestro)

FORM 45

MAY, 1976

Prepared by
Testing and Evaluation for Bilinguals
A TITLE III ESEA PROJECT
Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit
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IN A SMALL VILLAGE

Ali went to the store for his mother. When he arrived at the store, he asked the storekeeper for five pounds of sugar. The man was quite old. He wore a white robe, and he had a red woolen hat on his head. All the men in the village _____ red hats like the one the _____ man had. Ali was not yet _____ enough to wear one, and he _____ waiting for the day when his _____ would buy him one. The old _____ gave Ali the sugar. Ali paid _____ and ran back to his house.

_____ Ali's father arrived home and called _____ out to help with the donkey. _____ fed the animal and brushed its _____ where the saddle had been. His _____ told him he was a good _____ and would soon be old enough _____ go with him to the market _____ market day.

On the following Thursday, _____ father told him that he could _____ with him to the next village _____ the big market was. Together they _____ the donkey with four sacks of _____, and soon they were walking down _____ big road that led to the _____.

The father and son went to _____ merchants to buy things that were _____ at home.

"Now, Ali," his father _____, "there is one more thing

that we have to buy."

They went down a street and stopped in front of a hat merchant's shop. Ali's father asked the merchant to bring out a hat for his son. Ali could not believe his ears. He was so pleased that he could not speak. His father took the red woolen hat and placed it on his son's head.

"Ali," he said, "now you are a man."

• • • • •

PARKING PROBLEMS

At 3:30 p.m. Jim parked his car at the curb. The meter needed twenty-five cents per hour, and he searched through his pockets for a quarter. Unfortunately, he didn't have any change. There was a drugstore on the next _____, and he ran in to change _____ dollar.

In the time it _____ him to get back to his _____, a motorcycle cop had already begun _____ out a ticket. Jim explained, and _____ the cop was in a good _____. He let him go without a _____.

Jim thankfully put a quarter in _____ parking meter and headed up the _____ to the office building where he _____ a business appointment. He knew that _____ had an hour on the meter, _____ he was positive he could get _____ _____ in time.

He had timed everything _____. He got out of the meeting _____ forty-five minutes and headed outside _____ his car. It wasn't there. Thinking _____ he had parked further down the _____, Jim walked on another block. His _____ wasn't there. Then he saw a _____ truck further d wn the block which _____ stopped in front of a parked __ _ _____. The truck driver got out and _____ up the car. He lifted the _____ of the car with his winch.

Then Jim realized that any car parked on this street after four o'clock would be towed away. There were signs all up and down the street that said, "NO PARKING AFTER 4:00 P.M.". His car had been towed away.

* * * * *